



National Brownfields Assessment Pilot

Rochester, NY

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Between 1995 and 1996, EPA funded 76 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. EPA is funding more than 27 Pilots in 1997. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

BACKGROUND

EPA selected the City of Rochester for a Brownfields Pilot. Over the past 15 years, Rochester has suffered a significant decline in its manufacturing sector, precipitated by the relocation of several large, integral companies. Many of these companies have abandoned large, multi-storied facilities in favor of smaller, more efficient facilities. The potential threat of contamination and liability at the abandoned facilities has inhibited assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment. As a result, the City's tax base has decreased, the physical structures have deteriorated, criminal activity has increased, and the morale of the community has suffered.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of Rochester's brownfields effort is to eliminate the current bias against urban brownfields by correcting misconceptions about potential liability and informing the public about the positive opportunities for redevelopment and growth. Other objectives include identifying incentives for attracting developers, arranging feasible property transfers, and creatively using New York State's new voluntary cleanup program.

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Rochester, New York

Date of Award:
September 1995

Amount: \$200,000

Site Profile: The Pilot targets site characterization and cleanup plans for brownfields throughout the City, including a 15.5-acre portion of the City's Erie Canal Industrial Park (ECIP).

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Visit the EPA Brownfields Website at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

By focusing the Pilot's resources and efforts on specific, marketable, private and public sites, Rochester expects to encourage substantial assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment. In addition, this Pilot will emphasize and strengthen the Rochester Brownfields Working Group's role as an effective advisory and problem-solving body on brownfields issues.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot has:

- Established a "no risk" revolving loan/grant incentive fund that owners and developers of brownfields can use for site assessments, feasibility analyses, and concept plans;
- Completed an inventory of large brownfields in 1995. The Pilot will evaluate and add new sites to the inventory as interest in the Rochester brownfields redevelopment grows;
- Identified and prioritized the most promising sites for redevelopment in the City's brownfields inventory by having Rochester's Brownfields Working Group (RBWG) tour Rochester's large brownfields with City staff; and
- Conducted initial site assessments at the ECIP.

The Pilot is:

- Evaluating current zoning policies and regulations, identifying issues related to management and redevelopment of older industrial complexes, and generally coordinating assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment concept plans for developers interested in City-owned brownfields;
- Evaluating and adding new sites to the inventory as interest in the Rochester brownfields redevelopment grows; and
- Developing and implementing a local program performance evaluation system.

LEVERAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES

Experience with the Rochester Pilot has been a catalyst for related activities including the following.

- Made available an initial list of sites for which Brownfields Revolving Funds (BRF) are available to prospective developers and businesses. Expanded funding program to include all sites meeting BRF criteria. Initially established the Rochester Brownfields Revolving Fund using EPA cooperative agreement money to make available "no risk" funding to businesses and developers interested in investigating brownfields for potential redevelopment. Revolving fund program requirements include a specification that award recipients enter into a voluntary investigation agreement with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Repayment of the revolving fund awards will be required only if redevelopment proceeds. Applications for several sites are under review.
- Under the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's voluntary cleanup program, Rochester negotiated a work plan for additional investigation, risk assessment, and cleanup and redevelopment planning for the ECIP. Field work was initiated in the fall of 1996. Cleanup funding was acquired by the City and a viable redevelopment proposal for a portion of the park was received.
- Using the "Neighborhood Team Process," a citizen empowerment program, to bring residential communities into the reuse decision-making process.